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# IONE

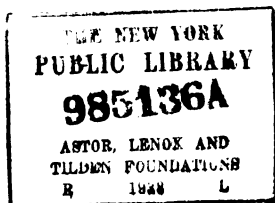
## A TALE OF EPHESUS

By JAMES S. PARK

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# IONE.

## I.



IN days of seedtime of the Christian  
faith,

When men were seeking every-  
where for light,

Or clasping old traditions close, there lived  
At Ephesus a venerable Greek  
Called Ctesiphon. The changing years had  
left

Their grief as well as gladness in his heart ;  
His life-long friend, Antonius of Rome,  
Coming on business ventures, year by year,  
Had been persuaded, ere his last return,  
To leave awhile his young son, Marius ;  
But midway in the voyage the treacherous  
wind

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Whirled the calm ripples into angry waves,  
And driving his galley hard upon the rocks,  
Sunk it, with all on board. The sad news  
came

Months afterward to the Ephesian home,  
And music changed to mourning. But the  
boy

Was loved and cherished by his father's  
friend,

And hardly did he know his orphanage  
Till his adoption. Soon he had become  
The dear companion in all pleasant hours  
Of the three sisters, younger than himself,  
Ione, Lesbia, and Pelope.

Gay, eager rivals were they in the search  
For the first wild-flowers after winter's  
snows ;

They watched the kingly eagle, floating high,  
Or wondered at the rainbow's radiant arch,  
Or roaming in the dim old forest, learned  
Secrets of birds and bees, of trees and  
moss ;

They sailed their mimic fleets upon the  
stream,



While sitting down, they cut long, hollow  
stalks,  
And breathing in them brought forth mel-  
low tones ;  
Or chased, with ringing laughter, playful  
goats  
Around the field, till flushed and out of  
breath,  
They sank down panting in the fragrant  
grass ;  
And many another pastime filled the days'  
Deep chalice to the brim with sparkling  
wine.

Five happy years went by on shining wings ;  
Then came a change, as Marius was of age  
For Roman schooling, as Antonius wished,  
In eloquence, and arms, and government,  
At the world's capital. Darker seemed the  
house,  
And dimmed the sunshine over all the land,  
When he had left them, after long farewells.  
Ione wandered restlessly about,  
Missing her leader in a hundred ways,

Till marking how a cloud enwrapped the  
hearts

Of father, mother, sisters, even the slaves,  
She strove by thoughtful, gentle ministry  
To bring back smiles and gladness. Day  
by day

Their loss was lessened, and she took his  
place,

As far as might be, to depending ones.

Then letters came, as months and years  
rolled on,

Telling of progress, with a glow of pride  
In deeds of ancient days, and how he  
burned

Already to be leader of a host  
In some great enterprise. Ione felt  
A thrill of sympathy with all his thought,  
And treasured up the words like precious  
gems,

Because he wrote them.

But a dark-browed Guest  
Was daily drawing nearer to the house  
Unbidden, till at length they heard a knock

Imperious, and he entered, took the hand  
Of wife and mother in his chilling clasp,  
And she whose life was closely twined with  
theirs,

Making one harp-string, sounding full and  
sweet,

Passed into silence, with the voiceless  
shades.

Then Ctesiphon's sad, desolated heart,  
Too tender for his grim philosophy,  
Would not be comforted, but wandered out  
Into the darkness, asking for some strong  
Assurance of an endless, unseen life,  
With re-united souls, but all in vain.

Ione nobly strove again to fill  
A place made vacant, but her weight of grief  
Was overpowering sometimes, till she slipped  
Away from all, and wept despairingly.

The younger children felt the sudden shock  
Less keenly, and their spirits soon revived,  
Till sunshine almost filled their restless  
hearts,

Save in the father's presence, when they  
marked

How slow his step, how sorrowful his face,  
Where grief had ploughed deep furrows in  
the brow,  
And scattered ashes on his hair and beard,  
Until it seemed that in the space of months  
Long years had passed ; instinctively they  
hushed  
Their laughter then, and spoke in lower  
tones.

So the dull days crept on with folded wings ;  
The sun, retreating toward the southern  
pole,  
Was sometimes hid from sight by leaden  
clouds,  
And chilly winds began to blow from seas  
And eastern deserts, heralds of the stern  
Gray monarch Winter ; soon the shivering  
land  
Lay bound in icy fetters, and no voice  
From Nature's myriad summer tongues  
could speak  
Of coming life and beauty, — all was death.

## II.



THREE times had Winter's scepter  
ruled the earth,  
And thrice been broken by the  
hand of Spring ;  
But by a shorter way than Nature knew  
The guide Necessity was bringing forth  
The woman in Ione ere her years,  
And many a grace, unseen by radiant sun  
Of youth and gladness, blossomed in the  
night  
Of sorrow, like some lovely snow-white  
flower  
That shuns the glare of daytime. When  
she passed  
Along the public ways, her floating hair  
And downcast, dark-fringed eyes and quiv-  
ering lips  
Compelled attention ; many turned about  
For second glance, and murmured, " Beau-  
tiful ! "

But one there was, the proud Neocritus,  
High-priest of great Diana, whose bold gaze  
Respected not her shrinking. Openly  
He led a righteous life, but down beneath  
Lay smouldering an evil, passionate heart,  
Whose fires flamed red in secret. But few  
dared

A whisper of dark deeds supposed or  
known,

Because the priest was powerful; his com-  
mand

A law supreme. Many a priestess fair  
Serving within the temple, was the tool  
Or partner of his sin. And having marked  
Ione's beauty, all his varied arts  
Of soft persuasion were arrayed to win  
The maiden to this virgin company,  
As the lithe serpent seeks to lure the bird  
With fiery, flashing eyes and graceful coils,  
Till the poor victim flutters helplessly,  
The strange, wild fascination having dulled  
The sense of danger.

But Ione's soul  
Beheld unceasingly the mother's face  
Through mist of tender memory; father's  
age  
And sister's youth required her loving care,  
And one she saw in dreams, she doubted  
not  
Would some day come again. Besides she  
felt  
A vague, unreasoning fear, and strong dis-  
like  
As often as she met Neocritus.  
Yet answer absolute she dared not give,  
And trembling, pleaded longer time for  
thought,  
Whereat the priest, though chafing inwardly,  
Forebore to press his purpose; better far  
A future favorite than present slave!

One day Ione, with a heavy heart,  
Was passing listlessly along the way  
To some secluded spot, when brokenly  
A sound of reading reached her, and the  
voice,



Low-toned at first, yet thrilled exultingly,  
As if the reader felt a climax come, —  
A fair, white dayspring, — and his waiting  
soul

Rose like a lark to meet it. Drawing near  
The open door, she listened eagerly : —

*"I would not have you to be ignorant,  
Brethren, concerning them that are asleep,  
So that ye sorrow not, as others do  
Which have no hope."*

("Ah!" sighed Ione, "I  
Am one of those; what hope can come  
to me?")

Again she listened : —

*"For the Lord himself  
Shall come down out of heaven with a  
shout,  
The voice of the archangel, and the trump  
Of God; thereat the dead in Christ shall  
first  
Arise, then we which are alive shall all  
Be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord  
And be forever with him!"*

Here she turned  
And swiftly walked away with burning  
face.

Surely this was the Christian sect, despised  
By all her people, — in her father's words,  
“A Galilean folly, far beneath  
The least attention of a thoughtful Greek !”  
She did not know that, years before, the  
flame

Of Christian zeal had spread from house to  
house,

Kindled by PAUL, nor that the words were  
his

Which she had heard repeated ; but they  
glowed

Within her like the morning star in heaven,  
Distant and cold, yet hinting warmth and  
cheer.

“Great words,” she mused, “yet meaning-  
less to me.

Who are ‘the dead in Christ,’ and how can  
they

Be raised by any power this poor sect  
knows?

Nay, I am but a foolish child to think  
On such delusions; none can raise the  
dead!"

But still the music of that noble voice  
Lingered within her memory; and a wish  
That somehow all might be as she had  
heard

Drew her, almost unconsciously, again  
Some days thereafter, to the same low  
door,  
Trembling with shame, though hungering  
for a hope.

An influence all unguessed was guiding her  
In ways mysterious to learn of Him,  
The All-sufficient One, whose infinite heart,  
Forgetting none of heaven's vast multi-  
tudes,  
Twined round our little earth when time  
began,  
And in far Eden breathed the breath of life  
Immortal into man, forevermore, —  
Almighty Love, whose everlasting arms,

That hold the whirling universe in place,  
Are always underneath the fainting souls  
Of all that seek Him, so that none may sink  
Into eternal darkness, asking light.

The reading was in progress as she reached  
The Christian's house, and swiftly glanced  
around

For watchful, curious eyes. Save for herself  
The narrow street was now deserted quite,  
And reassured she listened. Smooth and  
calm,

In quiet dignity, the reader's words  
Flowed like a steady, sunlight-cleaving  
stream : —

*“ God that hath made the world, and all  
therein,*

*Seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth,  
Doth not inhabit temples made with hands ;  
Neither can he be worshipped with men's  
hands,*

*As if he needed aught, for he hath given  
To all the breath of life, and all things else,*

*And made all nations of one common blood,  
To dwell on all the earth, and hath ordained  
The times before appointed, and their bounds,  
That they should seek the Lord, if haply  
thus*

*In feeling they might find him, though  
he be*

*Not far from every one of us, because  
In him we live and move; in him we  
have*

*Our being, — as your poets also say :  
For we are all his offspring. Therefore,  
since*

*Mankind is sprung from God, we ought not  
think*

*That Deity is like to graven gold,  
Silver, or stone, in forms devised by man.  
God hath allowed these times of ignorance,  
But now commands repentance everywhere,  
Because a day hath been appointed when  
The world shall all be judged in righteous-  
ness*

*By one ordained thereto, in sign of which  
He raised him from the dead."*

Ione stood  
Lost in a maze of thought, and scarcely  
heard  
Beyond the strange, new words, "We ought  
not think  
That Deity is like to graven gold,  
Silver, or stone, in forms devised by man."  
That ancient image in the temple came,  
So she had learned, from mighty Zeus  
himself,  
Descending through the clouds, in the dim  
dawn  
Of Asian history; who knew if this  
Were truth or not? If not, and man had  
formed  
The statue, was it not the poor, weak  
dream  
Of some old artist? Never help had come  
In answer to her prayers for strength and  
light  
From Artemis; had any ever seen  
In very truth the high, immortal gods?  
Did they exist at all, save in the mind  
Of man, their maker?

While she stood, confused  
With new-born doubts, the little company  
Had closed their service with a hymn of  
praise,  
And now came forth. But yet she heeded  
not,  
Until a touch aroused her; terrified  
She turned, and met the frank, inquiring  
eyes  
And gentle question of Alcæus, "Child:  
Art thou in trouble? Let the tender Christ  
Bear all thy burdens, and uplift thy soul!"

As when the icy bonds of fountains melt,  
Touched by the morning sunshine, all her  
pride  
Dissolved beneath the sudden sympathy,  
And the dry valley of her spirit filled  
To overflow with rush of tears released.

At this he led her to a seat within  
The little room, and waited for a space  
Before proceeding; then with questions kind  
He learned her history.

Some sixty years  
Of earthly life Alcæns knew, and yet  
Few were the signs of care or weariness;  
A steadfast peace dwelt ever in his eyes,  
And as he talked with her a heavenly smile  
Hovered about his lips, or glorified  
At one swift radiance all the upturned face.  
Long time they sat there, while the western  
sun  
Began to gather up his golden robes,  
And on her spirit fell a strange, sweet calm,  
As if the Christ had whispered, "Peace, be  
still!"

At length she rose to go. Taking her hand  
With all a father's tenderness, he said:  
"Child, if thy mother never knew the  
Christ,  
For lack of opportunity, and yet  
Was heedful of his voice within her heart,  
Unconscious whence it came, I may not  
doubt  
That she has passed through death to  
Paradise.



For 'how shall they believe on him of  
whom

They have not heard?' So says the apostle

PAUL,

And underneath the words I seem to hear  
The heart-beats of the Father's infinite love  
And perfect justice sound in harmony.

Nay, more, — one day our Master met a  
man

Blind from his birth, and asking not for  
faith,

Put clay upon his eyes; then bade him  
wash

Within a certain pool, and when he saw,  
Declared himself the Son of God, whereat  
The man believed and worshipped. And

I know

That one so patient with the earthly eyes,  
In days when he was in the flesh, is not  
Less tender to the feeble sight of souls,  
Now that he reigns in glory. But to thee  
He giveth more of grace, and stands re-  
vealed

To-day in all his beauty; thou hast heard

His words of endless life ; believe in him  
And be at rest and peace forevermore !  
But yet I would not leave thee unaware  
Of coming trials, for my uncle heard  
The great apostle say that grievous wolves  
Should, after his departure, enter in  
Among us, sparing not the flock. The  
words  
May mean that we must seal our faith with  
death,  
Even as others ; yet remember this, —  
Our light affliction for a moment is,  
And worketh out a far exceeding weight  
Of everlasting glory. Let thy thought  
Dwell on these things, and come to us  
again  
The first day of the week, when thou shalt  
learn  
More of the Saviour ; meantime, fare thee  
well ! ”

So through the twilight haze Ione went,  
Slowly and wondering, to her home, and  
found

The place astir with news of Marius,  
Centurion of a company, on the way  
To Ephesus, to aid the garrison.  
And while with various thoughts her heart  
beat fast,

And flushed her face, and sometimes came  
a smile

To eyes and lips, as in the former days,  
The father watched her, half in bitterness,  
And murmured to himself, "Youth soon  
forgets !"

But rarely did he ask her of her life,  
And seldom had she gone to him for help  
Or counsel since the day her mother died,  
Because his grief absorbed him. So her  
thoughts

Throughout the week were surging to and  
fro ;

But one grand purpose, like a steady ship,  
Faint on the far horizon, grew more clear  
And bright and high, as o'er the sea it  
came,

Though lashed by winds of fear and chilly  
rain,

With waves of doubt strong dashing at the  
prow,  
Till calmer water at the port it reached,  
And in a morning fair, with breezes sweet,  
Dropped anchor in the deep, safe harbor,  
CHRIST !

But how to tell the others of her choice,  
What reasons give beyond their own, or why  
She had not spoken earlier of her mind, —  
Perplexed her yet ; and while she thought  
on this,  
Up from the plains one sunny morn there  
came  
Faint sounds of martial music, — then ap-  
peared  
A rolling cloud of dust, with points of light  
That circled round the roadway's nearest  
bend,  
And slowly rising, thinly veiled the ranks  
Of Roman soldiers, marching cityward, —  
Each moment nearer, wider, more distinct,  
The sunbeams breaking on their burnished  
arms

In glittering wavelets, as the rising tide  
Crept onward up the slope, until at last  
They reached and passed the gates, and  
    formed within ;  
Then, while the housetops swarmed with  
    eager groups,  
Steadily up the street the column came,  
With rhythmic step and swaying spears and  
    shields  
And waving plumes and ensigns gleaming  
    high  
And horses neighing at the trumpet call.  
Familiar faces all were in the van, —  
The city's garrison for many months, —  
But closely following their escort marched  
A company of strangers, whom all eyes  
Regarded curiously ; and at their head,  
Mounted upon a proud, high-stepping bay,  
Young Marius, a bronzed Apollo, rode,  
The promise of his childhood beauty filled  
To satisfaction by the ripening years ;  
And many knew the face, as on he passed,  
And shouted friendly greeting ; but the man,  
Erect and flushed, impatient of delay,

Scarce seemed to hear them, while the  
column wheeled

Into a well-remembered street, and there,  
Hardly a spear-cast from his hungry eyes,  
Arose his boyhood's happy, care-free home,  
The house of Ctesiphon ! And as he gazed,  
Upon the roof appeared the household, all  
Save one whose gentle face he longed to see,  
The only mother that he ever knew ;  
And the quick tears sprang up and veiled  
his sight,

The while they waved a welcome ; then he  
passed,

Swept onward, as it seemed, by all his men,  
And blended with the throng, so fading out,  
Beyond their keenest vision, as they turned  
And slowly left the roof, Ione last.

How long the day that sunders waiting  
hearts !

Upon her dial-plate the shadow slept,  
And Marius, chained by military cares,  
Looked often to the sun, that seemed to  
stand

Still in the heavens, while a fervent heat  
Bore down upon the land, until the breeze  
Of morning fled away, as if in fear.  
All life breathed hard, and shrank into the  
    shade,  
And when the day king reached his throne  
    of noon  
He ruled a silent city.

Hour by hour,  
High overhead the vault of dazzling blue  
Shone spotless; then its base began to fade  
Far to the southward, in a veil of mist,  
That gathered into feathery, floating clouds,  
Slow rising upward, and a whisper crept  
Along the land, a message from the sea,  
With promise of refreshing by and by.

At last the young centurion was released;  
And in the waning of the day he sat,  
Divested of his armor, at the home,  
And looked again into his dear ones' eyes;  
Without, a fountain in a spacious court  
Plashed musically, while the whirring birds

Dipped down to drink and bathe, and scattered drops  
Like diamonds round the basin. Then he told  
Of all his life, and answered questions grave  
From Ctesiphon, or listened to the talk  
Of Lesbia and Pelope with smiles,  
But ever glancing where Lone sat,  
Was filled with admiration at her face,  
Whose glowing eloquence was more than speech ;  
And in his heart he whispered, "She is mine !"

But while their souls were swept and stirred  
and thrilled  
To strong, glad harmony by winds of love,  
The sky was darkening ; glancing up they saw  
The storm king's sable hosts arrayed for war, —  
His fierce, impatient horses snorting fire,  
Their mighty hoofs upon the firmament,



That shook beneath their trampling ; then  
arose

The low, dread rumbling of his chariot  
wheels.

But in the pause that followed, suddenly  
Another shadow fell across the floor,  
And in the archway stood a white-robed  
form,—

The priest Neocritus.

Then all arose

In deference to his rank ; but with a smile  
Less courteous than crafty, he began  
Abruptly, as he took the offered seat :  
“ It may surprise thee, Ctesiphon, to know  
The purpose of my coming ; yet I trust  
That it may give thee pleasure. I have long  
Looked favorably upon thine eldest child,  
Because the generous gods have dowered her  
With graces like Pandora’s ; and I deemed  
Such beauty should adorn the temple courts  
Of Artemis, our Lady. To this end  
I oft have urged the maiden, but some  
cause —

I know not what—restrains her from the  
step ;

Wherefore I call thee to assist my words  
With reasoning of thine own. A father's  
voice

May well be more effectual than mine  
In setting forth the glory of the choice  
And honor of the service. This I ask,  
Not doubting of thy willingness to grant."

But Ctesiphon made answer dignified :  
"Thou knowest that my daughters are the  
stay

And solace of my swift-departing days,  
And surely it were better to have asked  
For my consent before thou soughtest hers.  
Yet think not I am one of those whose  
word

Is law unbending to a child's desire ;  
Ione is of age to know her will,  
And she shall have the fullest liberty  
To choose her future. Daughter, as thy  
wish

Shall be the answer, what hast thou to say?"

Then from her seat Ione rose, and stood  
Trembling and pale, but with a firm resolve  
To tell them bravely of her new-gained faith.  
Twice she essayed to speak, but found no  
words,

And in the glimmering, soundless lightning  
seemed

Some unsubstantial vision, as it lit  
Her form and features with unearthly  
gleams ;

And Marius, shuddering, thought of those  
dim shades

That wander silent through the underworld.  
At last her answer broke the stillness, low  
And faltering at first, then gaining strength :

“ Father, I thank thee truly, — not alone  
For these, thy generous words, but for the  
love

Which thou hast always lavished. But to  
prove

My gratitude, I can but gladly take  
The freedom given. And one thing I have  
done,

Sure of thy kindness, which must now be  
told ;  
Some other time will serve for questioning,  
Therefore I ask thy patience.

“Never once  
Have I desired to leave thee, but have  
sought  
Instead to be like sunshine in the house,  
Since that dark day we all remember well ;  
But mine own life was hopeless, till I  
learned  
A better way of living. I have left  
The ancient faith, unsatisfied, and now  
Am resting on the power of One whose  
name  
Is everywhere despised. And this new life  
Has lifted me above all common things,  
And filled me with its music ; and I feel  
That far beyond our earthly days, and  
death,  
Is life and joy undreamed of, peace and  
rest,  
My mother, — and the Christ of Galilee !”

She ceased ; but none replied, — astonish-  
ment

Held all immovable, till Pelope,  
Close nestling at her shoulder, heard a faint,  
Soft whisper in the darkness of the room :  
“ Dear Lord, I have confessed thee ! Oh, do  
thou  
Remember me before thy Father’s throne ! ”

The high-priest waited for the old man’s  
word ;

But Ctesiphon sat still and made no sign, —  
His head bowed heavily upon his hand,  
As if he heard not, saw not ; whereupon  
Ione spoke again, with dignity :

“ Thou hast the answer, priest, — a Christian  
maid  
Disdains the service of a heathen shrine ! ”

Neocritus arose ; an angry flame  
Burned in his face, and flickered in his  
voice :

“ So be it, then ! Doubtless thy words are  
wise,

And all the rest of Ephesus are fools,  
Pleased with a toy ; but yet I say to thee,  
Beware the vengeance of the holy gods !  
The thunderbolts of Zeus — ”

Quick, as he spoke,  
A lightning flash that tore the heavens  
wide

Blazed full upon their faces, and a crash  
As if the very hills were shattered, rolled  
And boomed around them. With a startled  
cry

The trembling children caught their sister's  
hands

And clung about her, Lesbia gasping, “ See !  
The gods are angry at thy evil choice ! ”

“ Nay, Lesbia dear, fear not ; they have no  
power

Either for good or ill.” Another flash,  
Another deafening peal, — and Marius stood  
With folded arms and proud, uplifted head  
Between the sisters and the haughty priest,  
And thus addressed him : “ If the gods are  
wronged,

Let them avenge the insult as they will.

Thou camest for an answer, which thou  
hast ;

What further need is yet unsatisfied ? ”

“ Young man,” the priest returned, “ what-  
ever else,

I need not thee to prompt me ; and if thou  
Dost link thy life with hers, I need not ask  
For this thy rudeness greater recompense.  
I go, and trust my meaning will be plain  
Hereafter.”

He was gone.

A silence fell  
Upon them, deep and dread, their throb-  
bing hearts  
Filled with a nameless fear. Strange whis-  
perings  
Passed through the air above, as if the storm,  
Uncertain how to strike, were seeking out  
Each point of weakness.

But Ione marked  
That through all this her father had not  
moved ;

Alarmed at length, she swiftly crossed the  
room

And knelt before him, drawing down the  
hand

That held his forehead, as she gently said,  
“Dear Father, art thou angry? Have I  
done

So wrong in this? None loves thee more  
than I ;

Look in my face, and see !” He raised  
his head,

And tears bedimmed the eyes that looked  
in hers ;

A long, fond gaze ; a tender, trembling  
kiss, —

“Could I be angry with thy mother’s  
child ?”

“But, father, have I done a foolish thing ?”

“I know not, dear one, save it be not wise  
To cross the will of great Neocritus,  
As we have done to-day. But for thy  
faith,



Keep it, if thou art pleased ; small faith  
have I

In aught beyond my present sight and  
touch.

Sit here, my daughter, till the storm is past,  
That I may feel thee near me."

Silently

The others clustered round them.

Far away

The murmuring voices of the upper air  
Swelled to a sigh, a moan ; then with a  
roar

Weaving all lesser noises into one,  
The storm came rushing on. Swiftly the  
clouds,

Spreading their banners black, joined rank  
to rank

And hurled at once their javelins thick and  
fast, —

A wild, resistless avalanche of rain ;  
And all the little wandering mountain  
streams

Were swollen to foaming torrents ; and the  
trees,  
Lashed by the whirlwind's fury, bowed their  
heads  
And groaned submission to the conqueror ;  
Fierce lightnings flashed incessantly, and loud  
The thunder spoke in awful majesty  
Unto the crouching earth ; then darkness  
deep,  
Like bird of evil omen, settled down,  
With mighty, outstretched wings.

Within the room  
None spoke a word, till Marius' manly voice  
Startled their silence : " Father Ctesiphon,  
I know but little of Ione's faith,  
And may not guess the meaning of this  
storm,  
Unless it be a warning ; but I know  
That I have loved her since our childhood  
days,  
And whether well or ill that she has done,  
And punishment or not, I ask of her  
The greatest gift that man can ever ask.

I do not fear the priest ; and if the gods  
Should smite her to the earth, my only joy  
Would be to die with her in my embrace  
As promised wife. If thou approvest, thus  
I make request, despite the frown of Jove."

"Aye, Marius, it is well, if she consent."

"Ione, dearest, it is yea, — or nay?"

"Dear Marius," she began, with choking  
voice,

"As kind and brave as ever thou hast been,  
Didst thou not know that I was always  
thine?

I cannot give thee more than what thou hast ;  
And yet thy life and mine should never  
join,

Did I not know no evil would descend  
On thy dear head for aught that I have  
done.

Father, thy blessing?"

Kneeling at his feet  
They waited for the words.

At length he sighed, —  
“O unknown Powers that govern earth  
and sky  
And time and life and death, if ye exist,  
Be merciful ! Be merciful to these  
My children ! Grant them golden years of  
joy,  
With love new springing at each rising sun,  
And intertwine the threads of life so close  
That at the last the fatal Severer  
May not divide them, — one in life and  
death ! ”  
A pause, and then he said in calmer voice,  
“The rain has ceased, my children ; let us  
go  
And from the housetop watch the clouds  
disperse.”

The fresh, cool breezes fanned them in the  
face,  
Freighted with delicate odors, as they stood  
And saw the scattered legions of the sky  
Slowly retiring, — some in sullen ranks,  
While others, with a new allegiance, turned

And caught the colors of the conquering  
sun,  
Flaming in gold and crimson ; and the light  
Of victory and peace lay over all  
The city and the plain. White marble  
walls,  
Dripping with rain, reflected back the rays  
As from a mirror ; groups of trees stood up  
And held aloft their foliage, brilliant  
green, —  
Great sheaves of showery emeralds ; gardens  
fair  
Arose in terraces of sparkling grass,  
With fountains, gorgeous flowers and gleam-  
ing shrines ;  
Above them, palaces and lofty towers  
Climbed to a dizzy height, enriched and  
faced  
With ivory and dazzling bronze ; below,  
Like burnished shields, lay little lakes and  
pools ;  
Westward, the harbor quivered restlessly,  
A glowing topaz ; here the Forum shone,  
Yonder the Stadium ; and the generous light

Rolled o'er the benches of the Theatre  
A cataract of gold ; while in the east  
The Temple glittered like a mount of snow ;  
And round about the city curved the plain,  
All gemmed with wild-flowers, as a circlet  
    bright  
Bent round the fair, white arm of Loveli-  
    ness, —  
Her shifting, shimmering veil of thinnest  
    mist  
Spread out, and floating, whispering to the  
    sky,  
“ Bend lower now, and take her ; she is  
    thine ! ”

And Marius, smiling as he read the scene,  
Drew from his tunic's folds a bracelet,  
    wrought  
With intricate design of bird and leaf  
And flower, jewelled, flashing in the light,  
Clasped it around Ione's yielding arm,  
And bent his head and kissed her on the  
    brows.  
Too happy for a word, she raised her face

With shining, moistened eyes, and tremu-  
lous lips,  
And answered him in silence.

Long they stood,  
Clasped in each other's arms.

The sunset paled,  
And shadows deepened slowly into night,  
While one by one the calm, bright stars  
appeared ;  
And downward from the deep, mysterious  
sky,  
Like perfume dripping from an upturned  
vase,  
Softly and sweet, descended balmy rest.

## III.



WIFTLY the weeks and months  
had flown away,  
Till once again the glad-eyed  
Summer stood  
Close at the threshold of her kingdom fair.  
'T was early morning now upon the plains  
Of Ephesus. A faint, gray mist upcurled  
From Caÿster, winding slowly toward the sea  
In slumbrous music, rippled by the breeze  
That stole through groves of oak and tere-  
binth  
And cedar, fresh and fragrant. Meadow  
flowers  
Upraised their swaying, dew-filled cups,  
and smiled  
To the fast paling stars, as if to say,  
"O brothers, rest, and we will shine for  
you!"  
From river margin and the pearl-hung  
grass



And oleander bushes and the woods  
Came twittering questions of the day's  
advance,  
While glowed the east with promise, —  
amber skies  
Yielding to orange, melting into gold,  
Till up the gleaming pathway came the sun  
In royal majesty, and touched the tops  
Of Prion and Coressus, sister hills,  
With magic fire ; then, shooting swift and  
far  
His glittering arrows, pierced the lingering  
shades.

The crisp, delicious air was vibrant now  
With wakening life, and every feathered  
throat  
Poured out a flood of golden melody,  
And insects droned and chirped, while  
flocks and herds  
Moved slowly toward the river pools to  
drink.  
Soon city gates were opened ; guards were  
changed ;

Some few brown, sinewy laborers appeared  
Upon the streets, with instruments of toil;  
Sellers of fruits made ready for the day;  
Young flower girls began to twine their  
wreaths,

And in an hour of sunrise all the town  
Hummed with a varied population. Here,  
Soldiers in shining armor, shaven priests,  
And civil officers in trailing robes;  
There, Jews of Palestine, or little groups  
Of Grecian poets and philosophers;  
Ladies of rank in gilded litters, borne  
By stalwart men, who slowly pushed their  
way,

Elbowing active sailors from the coasts  
Of Tyre and Sidon, or thin Bedouins  
From lonely Petra and the wilderness;  
The dwellers by Euphrates and the Nile  
Mixed with the half-clad Ethiopians;  
Princes, magicians, keen-eyed merchants,  
chiefs,

Barbarians of the North, brought side by  
side

With temple servants, artists, artisans,

Musicians, perfume-mixers, burnishers,  
Or stooping water-carriers, patient beasts  
Of burden, and their drivers, — slaves of all  
Degree and occupation crowded close  
With poor and helpless ones, who idly  
gazed

Upon the busy scene, or feebly begged  
For food and coins. The dwellers in the  
town

Were far outnumbered by the visitors  
Drawn hither by the festival and games  
In honor of Diana; for the sun  
Had filled the season with exuberance,  
And springing grass and flowers and waving  
wheat

And whispering leaves and opening buds  
were held

To be bright tokens of her wondrous power  
And condescension.

At the city gates  
The throng divided, and the larger part  
Hurried impatient to the Stadium;  
Another company, with slower steps,

Passed in procession to the Temple, led  
By priests and priestesses; fair Lydian  
youths  
And maidens, singing soft, voluptuous airs,  
Mingled with merry Phrygians, while here  
Strode a Galatian warrior, yonder one  
Of Cappadocia; grave, gray devotees  
From all the provinces of Asia moved  
In strange varieties of dress and speech,  
But with one purpose, — to propitiate  
The goddess for their homes.

At length they reached  
The open plain, and knelt adoringly,  
While in full view the mighty structure rose.

A terraced way led to a staircase broad,  
Polished and worn by countless worshippers,  
And from the marble platform, smooth as  
glass,  
An hundred columns reared their stately  
strength,  
Massive and carved, full thirty cubits high, —  
Many the gifts of kings, and others wrought

By pious hands of masters in their art.  
Far up, above their graceful capitals,  
Cornice and frieze and architrave spread out  
Stories of strife and conquest mystical,  
Crowned by a roof of gleaming marble tiles ;  
And all the building throbbed with sculp-  
tured life,  
Or glowed with splendid painting ; calm-  
eyed gods  
And goddesses, or struggling Amazons,  
Heroes and warriors ; Hermes, mighty Zeus,  
Or Pallas, Heré, Artemis herself,  
And Aphrodite, Eros with his bow,  
Poseidon and his trident, deities  
Of stream and field and forest ; satyrs,  
nymphs,  
Or demigods, — as wondrous Herakles,  
Strongest of mortals. Here a Centaur stood ;  
Yonder came Tritons blowing on their  
shells ;  
And all around were lions' heads, and rams,  
And piled up fruit, mingled with opening  
flowers  
And twining honeysuckle. Phidias,

Praxiteles, Apelles, many more,  
Masters and skilful workmen; all had  
wrought

With far-famed architects, until there stood  
At Ephesus the wonder of the world  
And envy of all Hellas. In the midst  
The statue towered high, — an image rude,  
Yet revered more than all the glorious  
forms

By which it was surrounded. Even so  
The soul of man, reaching a barren height  
Unsatisfied, had waited not, but turned,  
And backward traced its wandering, doubtful steps,

Till every higher faculty became  
The handmaid of a lower. Grand indeed  
The Temple stood, yet shrined a foolish  
faith;

And even the lowest, meanest worshipper,  
Trembling, perhaps, in superstitious fear,  
Had powers greater than he gave his gods.

Rising at length, the multitude advanced,  
And hours were spent in sacrifice and rites

Mysterious, — sacred dances, incense, chants,  
Till after mid-day ; then the priests ap-  
peared,

With all the temple servitors again,  
And followed by the people, took the road  
That reached the Stadium. Musicians first,  
With ringing cymbals, piercing double-flutes,  
And other instruments ; then girls and boys,  
Singing and dancing, bearing fruits and  
flowers ;

And after them, Neocritus alone, —  
His thick, black hair uncovered to the sun,  
A stern, set face, thin lips, and flashing eyes,  
And garmented in sacrificial robes,  
With heavy, lustrous folds. Behind him  
marched .

The priests and priestesses, in ranks that  
spread

Across the roadway, chanting high and shrill  
The hymn to Artemis. And others bore  
Aloft upon their shoulders images  
Of gold and silver ; then the surging crowd  
Pressed forward shouting, joined along the  
way

By scores belated, till they reached the arch  
Of entrance to the Stadium.

Then at once  
The vast assemblage rose tumultuously,  
And everywhere were lifted arms and scarfs,  
And fluttering veils, and a great, throbbing  
    roar  
Of eager voices :

“*Artemis !*”

“*Behold*

*Great Artemis !*”

“*Diana !*”

“*Artemis !*

*All Asia worships thee !*”

“*Diana !*”

“*Great*

*Is Artemis of Ephesus !*”

And spears  
And swords and shields responded with a  
    clang  
That seemed to shake the building. Only  
    one



In all that multitude was silent, one  
Who leaned against a pillar, faint and pale  
In agony of spirit, — Marius.

His men had marvelled much to see him ride  
Before them on that morning listlessly,  
The loose rein dropping from his nerveless  
    hands,  
And all unseeing where he went, his eyes  
Too weary for a glance, his body drooped  
In utter weakness. Now he stood alone,  
And shivered as if sickness seized him.  
    Why?

Beneath his feet a dungeon lay ; within,  
Close crowded in the narrow, noisome place,  
Were Christians ; all the steadfast little  
    church,  
Alcæus, — and Ione !

On the day  
The high-priest left the house of Ctesiphon,  
Angered that one slight girl should balk his  
    power,

He planned revenge. A word dropped here  
and there,

A hint to artisans, a prophecy  
Of danger should the Christians multiply  
Again, as years before, at words of PAUL,  
A warning that the city might decline  
If reverence for Artemis should fail,  
Had blown the ashes of indifference  
Aside and fanned the slumbering coals of  
hate

Into a flame, till all at once a mob  
Rushed to Alcæus' house in fury, dragged  
The Christians forth and bound them, hurry-  
ing back

To the authorities, clamoring for their death,  
Which, after consultation, was decreed,  
Pending permission of the Emperor,  
As fitting climax to the festival  
In preparation.

Ctesiphon had gone  
With Marius impetuous to the priest,  
And offered gold and jewels, — anything  
To save Ione; but of no avail

Were all their efforts, — coldly he replied :  
“Our Lady Artemis desires the hearts  
As well as offerings, and it is her will  
That all who mock her shall be put to  
death ;  
Be thankful that your lives are not required,  
And cease to ask for her who dared despise  
Our holy faith !”

All hope was over now,  
Unless she should recant ; but from below  
Faintly the sound of Christian hymns arose,  
And Marius felt that none of them would  
yield.

No, never ! In that suffocating cave,  
Darker than midnight, all were kneeling now,  
Led by Alcæus in a fervent prayer.  
The weary hours of day and night had  
passed  
Alike to them ; the only light they had  
Glared from the lions' eyes behind the bars ;  
Instead of heaven's sweet winds upon the  
brow,

The hot breath of their nostrils ; and they  
    heard  
In all the pauses of the sacred song  
Deep growls of hunger. Grasping each  
    other's hands  
They trembled, — but a consciousness of  
    power  
Beyond their own upheld them.

Meanwhile, games  
Were going on above ; the wrestlers strove  
And writhed for mastery, and athletes ran,  
As if by Hermes sandalled, for the crown ;  
The pugilists, with heads and necks like  
    bulls,  
Rained desperate blows upon each other ;  
    then  
Strong gladiators struggled for their lives,  
With swords and nets and tridents. And  
    their strife  
Stirred up the people as wild beasts are  
    stirred  
To savagery by the taste of blood,  
And all along the benches ran the words, —

A murmur, rising to an awful cry,  
Hoarse and persistent, crueller than death,—  
“*Bring out the Christians !*”

Then a space was cleared  
And fenced with soldiers, and an altar placed  
Before a statue of the goddess, wreathed  
About the base with roses ; and behind  
Were ranged the priestesses,—the Asiarch  
Lysanias of Smyrna in the chair  
Of judgment. Soon the prisoners were  
brought  
Before him, one by one, Alcæus first.

The accusation read, Lysanias asked :  
“Art thou a Christian?”

“Yea !”

“And dost thou know  
The penalty?”

“I do.”

“What madness, man,  
Has prompted thee to throw away thy life?  
Be reasonable,—curse the Christ ; that done,  
I may release thee.”

“Ay, thou dost not know  
That he who loses life for Christ’s sweet  
sake  
Shall find it more abundantly. Thy power  
And all thou hast is given thee from him !”

“Take him away.”

And hurriedly they tried  
The others ; but none yielded. Last of all  
Ione answered to the summons. Then  
The high-priest had her father brought  
within,  
With Lesbia and Pelope, that all  
Might suffer to the utmost, and prepared  
To read the grim indictment.

But a hand  
Seized hers in shaking grasp, and in her ear  
Trembled the voice of Marius, changed  
and harsh  
With deadly fear, as rapidly he said :  
“Ione, dearest, listen ! Leave the Christ  
And call upon Diana ! Take of these,”—

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Catching some jewels from a casket brought  
By Lesbia, — “ these ornaments of thine,  
And offer on her altar for thy life !  
Nay, take the bracelet, dearest, for I know  
That I must give thee up in life or death ;  
But oh, thou must not die ! Ione — ”

“ Dear — ”

She slowly turned her face, all wet with  
tears,  
And looked him in the eyes. The throng  
around

Bent forward eagerly to catch the words :  
“ My Marius, dost thou tempt my soul with  
these

To leave my Master, as Iscariot did?  
And even if I might, what should I care  
For any life without thee? Oh, my own,  
Dear father, sisters, friends, I love not life  
Better than truth ! The gracious Christ I  
serve

Will raise me up again. Let all of you  
Who love me learn of him, and any death  
Shall only re-unite us. Marius,

Thou hast not dreamed how much I love  
thee yet ;  
But thou wilt know hereafter."

Down she drooped  
Her weary head, and murmured, "O my  
Lord,  
I thank thee for this sudden, wondrous  
strength,  
Made perfect in my weakness!"

And a sigh  
Involuntary broke from all the crowd,  
As the tense bowstring, suddenly released,  
Springs to its place with apprehensive thrill,  
Foreseeing death in the arrow. Ctesiphon  
Groaned in despair, and wrung his helpless  
hands  
Convulsively ; and down the sisters' cheeks  
Tears fell like rain. But Marius staggered  
back,  
Weak as a child, and would have fallen to  
earth  
Had not a soldier stayed him.



Then the priest,  
Unmoved, began to read the charge. But  
she —

Lifting her violet eyes above the throng,  
Above the circling thousands in the seats,  
Along the side of green Coressus, up  
Beyond the trilling, soaring birds — at  
length

Rested in God's blue sky, while all of earth  
Seemed to dissolve away. Slowly a vision  
sweet  
Opened before her.

For a pearly cloud  
That closed one gate of heaven rolled  
aside,  
And a bright spirit beckoned her within, —  
The mother's face and form ; but glorious  
now  
In such a smile as those redeemed may  
wear !  
Then, while the glad sight filled Ione's  
gaze,  
And scarce a breath escaped the parted lips,

Her hands close locked, in rapture keen as  
pain,

Suddenly all the avenue was filled  
With countless flashing ones, that raised  
their harps

And sang triumphantly, "*Ay, blest are they,  
The pure in heart, for they shall see their  
God!*"

And others answered them afar, "*These  
came*

*Out of great tribulation, and their robes  
Are white and glistening; they are washed  
in blood,*

*Even the Lamb's, who bears away the sin  
Of all the world!"*

And then a splendor burned,  
Dazzling the wing-veiled angels; but she  
saw,

Even with eyelids closed, the form of One  
Like to the Son of Man, with hands and  
feet

Pierced by the cross-nails; and his thrilling  
voice

Rang full and tender as the far, sweet chime  
Of silver cymbals :

“ BE THOU NOT AFRAID  
OF THEM THAT KILL THE BODY, AND AFTER  
THAT  
HAVE POWER TO DO NO MORE, — FEAR NOT,  
MY CHILD ;  
I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE,  
AND THOU SHALT BE WITH ME IN PARADISE  
TO-DAY ! ”

The Asiarch, wondering at her face,  
Thrice questioned ere she heard him ; then  
she said,  
“ Yea, I am ready ! ” So they led her out, —  
The rude, imbruted Ethiopian slaves  
Awe-struck and trembling at her confidence, —  
And from the arena's sands of bloody death,  
She, with a score of others, entered Life.

. . . . .

Beneath the dust of centuries there lies  
A sculptured tomb of marble, with these  
words

Engraved upon the pavement: "IN THIS  
PLACE

SLEEPS IN THE PEACE OF JESUS CHRIST THE  
DUST

OF CTESIPHON AND IONE, SIDE BY SIDE,  
FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"BLESSED ARE THE DEAD  
WHOSE DEATH IS IN THE LORD; THEY REST  
FROM STRIFE,

AND THEIR WORKS FOLLOW THEM.

"THIS TOMB WAS BUILT  
BY MARIUS, A MINISTER OF CHRIST."















